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## ABSTRACT

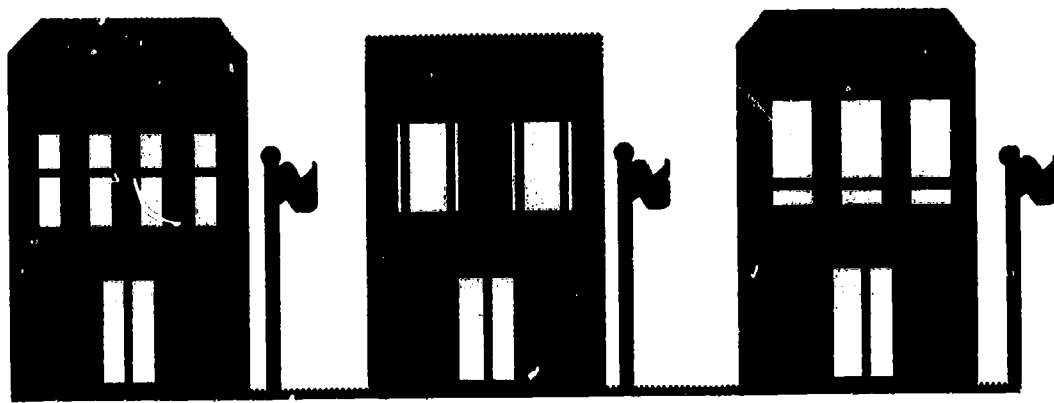
This paper discusses implications of open enrollment policies for students with disabilities and for districts that gain or lose students with disabilities through transfer. An introductory section examines how open enrollment differs from other "choice" options and offers general arguments for and against open enrollment. The remainder of the paper identifies issues for both districts and students organized in terms of outcome issues, implementation issues, and demographics. Issues for districts include: program excellence, assessment practices, gain/loss of teachers, excess program costs, changes in excess levies, effects on special education child counts, Chapter I allocations, criteria for between-district transfers, planning, provision of information, local control, transportation, criteria for identifying students as handicapped, mainstreaming, Native American schools, and small rural districts. Issues for students who are handicapped include: parental satisfaction/involvement, student satisfaction, effects on academic performance and student behavior, environmental quality, dropout rate, least restrictive environment, provision of information, transportation, reasons for non-participation, dropouts as an independent variable, fairness, equity, and student demographic characteristics. Five kinds of overall concerns are identified: pupil benefit, parent involvement (and convenience), teacher/administrator job projection, change, and teacher workload. Appended are an agenda and issue list. Includes 22 references. (DB)

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# **Open Enrollment and Students With Disabilities: Issues, Concerns, Fears, and Anticipated Benefits**

**Monograph No. 91-001**



## **Enrollment Options for Students with Disabilities**

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and Joe Nathan**

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**

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Issues, Concerns, Fears, and Anticipated Benefits**

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## Notes

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## **Executive Summary**

Open enrollment is a hotly debated form of educational choice. While state plans vary, more than 20 states now have legislation establishing or expanding public school choice options. The discussion of choice, open enrollment, and enrollment options rarely includes specific reference to students with disabilities. In this paper we describe implications of open enrollment for students with disabilities and for districts that gain or lose students with disabilities through transfer. Our description is based on a review of the professional literature and on the results of an issues clarification working session attended by professionals, legislators, parents, and students.

A working session was held in St. Paul, Minnesota, in September, 1990 for the purpose of describing and discussing the implications of open enrollment for students with disabilities and districts. There are three kinds of issues for districts and students: outcome issues, implementation issues, and demographic issues. We describe these in detail. Issues identified were as follows:

### **Issues for Districts**

#### **Outcome Issues**

- Program Excellence
- Assessment Practices
- Gain/Loss Of Teachers
- Excess Program Costs
- Changes In Excess Levies
- Effects On Special Education Child Counts
- Chapter I Allocations

#### Implementation Issues

- Criteria For Between District Transfers
- Planning
- Provision of Information
- Local Control
- Transportation
- Criteria For Identifying Students As Handicapped
- Mainstreaming

#### Demographics

- Native American Schools
- Small Rural Disricts

#### **Issues for Students Who Are Handicapped**

##### Outcome Issues

- Parental Satisfaction/Involvement
- Student Satisfaction
- Effects On Academic Performance And Student Behavior
- Environmental Quality
- Dropout Rate

##### Implementation Issues

- Least Restrictive Environment
- Provision of Information
- Transportation
- Reasons For Non-Participation
- Dropouts As An Independent Variable

##### Demographics

- Fairness
- Equity
- Who Transfers

There are at least five major kinds of concerns reflected in debates about choice: concern about pupil benefit, parent involvement (and convenience), teacher/administrator job projection, change, and teacher workload.

The University of Minnesota Enrollment Options for Students with Disabilities Project is engaged in a five year study of the effects of open enrollment on students with disabilities. Collection of data will provide empirical evidence in response to concerns that are now largely a matter of opinion.

## **Open Enrollment And Students With Disabilities: Issues and Implications**

Public school choice is here. Yet, the extent to which it is here for students with disabilities is unknown. Providing parents and students with alternatives for where to go to school is considered among the "most innovative and promising reforms to have gained momentum during the late eighties" (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Nathan (1987) stated that "During the next decade, the trend toward more support among policy makers for expanding parental choice in education will continue to grow" (p. 751). President George Bush (1990) declared that "expanding parents' right to choose public schools is a national imperative," and in America 2000: An Education Strategy he said that "If standards, tests, and report cards tell parents and voters how their schools are doing, choice gives them the leverage to act" (p. 12). What are the expected outcomes of choice? Nathan (1989) described these when he said, "While public school choice programs will not solve all of our school problems, well-designed plans can help provide the freedom educators seek, the expanded opportunities many students need; and the dynamism the public education system requires" (p. 32). It is argued that the fundamental purpose of choice is increased student achievement, higher graduation rates, and better student attitudes toward themselves, schools, and learning.

Effective September 1990 parents of students in Minnesota schools could send their children to any district they chose,



unless the district (and schools they wish to attend) did not have space or doing so would create or further racial imbalance. Within recent years, more than 20 states proposed or passed legislation establishing or expanding public school choice options (Education Commission of the States, 1989b). The federal government has sponsored several conferences on choice programs in the public schools; news stories, editorials, and popular news magazines are increasingly covering issues related to the idea of providing parents, teachers, and students with greater options in education (Education Commission of the States, 1989a).

Public school choice has taken many forms. It can happen within school districts or across district lines. It can include a few schools within a district or all schools in a district or state. It can involve a few students in a district or every student in the state. Choices can be made by parents, students, and teachers.

There is much variance among states in enrollment options. Most states have at least one district that permits within-district enrollment options. More than 20 states have considered or are considering some form of across-district educational choice. Several states have passed legislation promoting interdistrict choice as a way of providing broader educational options to parents and students. Some states provide educational alternatives only to students who have not been successful in traditional educational settings; for example, Second Chance Programs in Colorado require that students be out of school for at

least six months before being eligible to enroll in any school in any district. Five states have postsecondary enrollment options that allow capable high-school students to take courses at colleges and universities. Many school districts have intradistrict choice plans. Schools of choice in some states include magnet or residential schools. Lawmakers in many states currently are considering open enrollment legislation or awaiting recommendations from official boards or task forces charged with developing public school choice proposals, and 6 other states are considering more limited plans (e.g., for "at risk" students or high school upperclassmen).

### **The Purpose of this Paper**

The discussion of choice, open enrollment, and enrollment options rarely includes specific reference to students with disabilities; when it does, it generally raises the issue, then dismisses it. In this paper we provide a brief overview of prevailing views expressed in the professional literature. We also describe what people say are the issues and concerns related to students with disabilities. In doing so, they express as well their fears about choice and the benefits they hope for in relation to students with disabilities when open enrollment legislation is enacted. Our description of what people say is based on the results of our formal convening of educators, administrators, legislators, parents, students, and policy makers who pinpointed issues and concerns. It is clear that individuals hold very different perspectives on open enrollment, and view the

process through very different lenses. As you will see throughout this paper, people fear choice, are outspoken advocates, or sit on the fence for quite different reasons. By design, the meeting was convened to identify issues that would arise specifically related to students with disabilities. Because of this, it was less likely that the opinions of strong advocates of choice would be voiced. In fact, those sitting on the fence would be more likely to express ideas that question choice because of the purpose of the meeting. Our goal was to identify all the issues that might arise and that would need to be addressed in order for choice to work for students with disabilities as well as it is said to do for students without disabilities. Further, it is important to recognize that we encouraged participants to think about all kinds of issues, not only those for the students themselves. Thus, we originally suggested that there might be issues that would affect the school district, and that these, in turn, could have an impact on the student.

We have organized our discussion into two sections: Issues and concerns for students with disabilities, and issues and concerns for districts. While many concerns for students are reflected in people's comments, right now they are not the most frequently raised. Rather, the majority of concerns are about administrative matters, logistics, job security and change. In our discussion, we make an effort to report the thoughts and beliefs of people in the field, without being reactive and entering in our own judgment about the issues.

## **How Does Open Enrollment Differ From Other "Choice" Options?**

Open enrollment is one form of "choice" in the public education system. "Choice" is the term used to indicate that there are alternatives within public education, and that parents, students, and teachers can exercise educational decision-making power by choosing among the alternatives. In the best plans, there are different kinds of schools, different philosophies, sizes, approaches, and so on. Various forms of choice exist. The open enrollment form of choice, in the most comprehensive sense, refers to a state-level policy in which students may transfer from their home district to any other district simply because they want to do so. The only constraints on transfer are desegregation and space availability.

Minnesota is on the cutting edge in providing educational choice options to parents and public school students. The Minnesota open enrollment law was one of the most comprehensive and far-reaching educational reform efforts undertaken by a state, and it has brought national attention to the state. Minnesota was the first state to enact open enrollment legislation. Two others (Iowa and Arkansas) were quick to follow with limited forms of open enrollment and Nebraska, Idaho, and Utah now have enacted legislation as comprehensive as Minnesota's. Other states are considering and adopting choice plans of their own. Many states and districts already have some form of "choice." In order to address the possible implications of open enrollment for students

with handicaps, it is necessary first to understand what "open enrollment" is and how it differs from other "choice" options.

In Minnesota, the "School District Enrollment Options Program" joins five other forms of educational choice on a statewide basis: (1) Programs of Excellence, (2) Postsecondary Enrollment Option Program, (3) High School Graduation Incentives Program, (4) Area Learning Centers, and (5) Educational Program for Pregnant Minors and Minor Parents. Moreover, some districts offer within-district options. The five existing forms of choice are described in brief in Table 1. The form of choice that has come to be known as "Open Enrollment" applies to students entering kindergarten through grade 12.

In the open enrollment program in Minnesota, any student entering kindergarten through grade 12 may apply to attend a school or program located in a district other than the one in which the pupil lives. That transfer may occur if it does not have a negative impact on integration efforts and if the receiving district has room. State monies follow students who use this option. All districts were required to participate in this program beginning in the 1990-91 school year. Still, certain conditions influence the implementation of the open enrollment option. For example, a student may be denied entrance to a district if the district lacks space overall, in a grade level, program or school. Further, a student may be denied entrance if the district would fall out of compliance with desegregation guidelines or enrollment of the student would have a negative

Table 1

Educational Choice Options in Minnesota<sup>a</sup>

Program	Description
Programs of Excellence	Secondary academic programs of excellence are offered throughout the state in a variety of subject areas. The programs, which are designated by the Commissioner of Education, are available to 100 academically motivated students in grades 7-11.
Postsecondary Option Program Enrollment	High school students may attend a college or technical institute, either full or part time, without cost, through this program.
High School Graduation Incentives Program	Persons meeting certain qualifications who wish to finish high school can choose from a variety of programs funded by the State of Minnesota to earn a high school diploma. Included in the programs are alternative learning centers, some colleges and technical institutes, some private schools, schools have programs for individuals over 21, some adult basic education programs under community education programs.
Area Learning Centers	These are alternative education settings in which the program is designed to meet the individual needs of the learners. Currently, centers exist in 35 areas, and others are being developed. Residents and nonresidents of the school district in which a center is located may attend. Area Learning Centers are one of the options available to persons participating in the High School Graduation Incentives or School District Enrollment Options Programs.
Educational Program for Pregnant Mothers and Minor Parents	Any person who is pregnant or a custodial parent and who has not graduated from high school or received a GED may choose from any educational program opportunities that lead to a high school diploma.

<sup>a</sup>This table excludes the "open enrollment" option, which is the focus of this paper and also the Charter School Option passed in the 1991 legislature.

impact on integration. While individual school districts make their own decisions about acceptance and rejection of applications, decisions may not include previous academic achievement, athletic or other extracurricular ability, handicapping condition, proficiency in the English language, or previous disciplinary proceedings.

### **General Arguments For and Against Open Enrollment**

There are a number of general arguments for and against open enrollment. Among the strongest arguments for choice is the recognition that there is no one best kind of school for all students (including those with disabilities) or all educators. It is argued that choice will enhance excellence, that students' academic achievement and attitudes will be improved when families have the opportunity to select different kinds of schools (Raywid, 1990). Some base their arguments for choice on market metaphors, contending that open enrollment will create efficiency: schools will strive to be better, and those that fail to do so will be forced to close.

Equity and stratification are issues in arguments for and against choice. Opponents argue that choice will limit equity; that it will result in stratification as good students flock to high quality schools and poor schools become dumping grounds for at-risk students, minority students, and students of poverty. Proponents contend that choice will extend to parents of students from all backgrounds new educational opportunities. They argue that we already have choice, but that it is restricted to parents

with high incomes. Parents make school choices when they choose where to live, but the choice to do so is often restricted to those who can afford to choose where they live, or can afford a car to get to work. They contend that the tracking systems now in place are vehicles of stratification. The topic of choice has become a highly emotional issue.

Arguments for and against open enrollment often become more specific as they relate to students with disabilities who are enrolled in special education. In the remainder of this paper we describe those issues, fears, concerns, and promises that arise.

### **Method**

Two approaches were used to advance our knowledge of open enrollment. First we searched the literature and interviewed a group of administrators, parents, teachers, and students. The group interviewed was one of convenience; we simply picked individuals we knew or whom we knew had opinions about open enrollment. We asked the group to tell us about issues, fears, concerns, and hopes they had for open enrollment relative to students with disabilities. These activities enabled us to generate an initial list of issues and concerns. We then held a one-day working session at which we established consensus on the issues and concerns. In the sections that follow we describe the participants and procedures used at the working session.

### **Participants**

Fourteen professionals representing various levels of state and local education agencies and parent organizations were invited



to a consensus conference designed to identify issues related to open enrollment of students with disabilities. Three state legislators, two state department of education officials, three directors of special education, two teachers, two state education association professionals, one parent and one parent-teacher organization representative participated. In addition, four students who had participated in enrollment options attended and took part in the meeting. Note that we did not make an effort to have the groups representative of larger groups. Rather, we picked people who had or were likely to have experience with open enrollment.

### **Procedures**

Prior to the conference, each participant received a packet containing three lists of issues and ranking sheets for each group of issues. The lists of issues included one set of issues for students who choose to transfer schools, another for students who choose not to transfer, and a third for districts.

Before coming to the working session, participants were asked to rank the issues in order of importance to them in their current positions. The following directions accompanied the three lists of issues:

1. Read through all color-coded sheets of issues for one area.
2. Rank each issue as high, medium, or low in importance.
3. Rank order issues within each grouping (high, medium, low).

4. Transfer final rankings (1=most important) to summary sheets.

5. Repeat Steps 1-4 for the other two sets of issues.

These ranked lists were collected as individuals arrived for the working session. After an introduction to a particular set of issues, participants were separated into groups and asked to discuss the issues, add new issues, and arrive at a consensus listing of issues. The groups were organized to be heterogeneous relative to professional's roles. Each small group discussion session lasted 45 minutes and was followed by a 45-minute total group discussion session in which small group rankings were presented and discussed. At the end of the day, a 30-minute whole group consensus discussion was held. During this time the group organized the sets of issues into conceptual categories. Two sets of issues were generated: (1) issues for students with disabilities and (2) issues for school districts. The issues are described in the sections that follow.

At the conclusion of the conference, average ratings for each set of issues were tabulated and compiled. These consensus lists of issues represent the results of interest in this paper. Note that our purpose here is simply to describe the issues rated as important, without reacting to their validity.

### **Issues for Students with Disabilities**

Three kinds of issues for students with disabilities were identified: Outcome issues, implementation issues, and demographic issues. These are described below.

### Outcome Issues

Five specific outcome issues were identified. These were as follow:

Student Satisfaction. It is argued that students would be more satisfied or have a better attitude toward school if they had an opportunity to select the school they attend and if the school is designed to meet their learning styles and interests. Students attending the working session indicated that the choice option was critical to their changing schools and districts, and that they were happier and doing better in their new school.

Parental Satisfaction/Involvement. It is argued that the parents of students with disabilities will be more satisfied // with their children's school performance and more involved in their children's schooling when they have an opportunity to select the school their children attend. The students who were present at our working session were of high school age, were attending an alternative school, and had experienced major trouble with traditional schools. Some were not living with either parent, all had parents who were not involved heavily in their lives. These students indicated that their parents had little to do with their decisions to transfer districts. In fact, one student summed up parent involvement when he said "Everybody kind of forced their parents into this decision." The argument related to parent

satisfaction/involvement is probably most relevant to students in elementary schools.

Effects on Performance, Behavior, and Attitudes. Participants in the working conference argued that another major outcome was the effect that transfer (or non-transfer) would have on student behavior, attitudes, and academic performance. It was argued that students with mental handicaps might move to districts where they believe they will have greater freedom, or where they might receive better instruction. A central issue is the extent to which student academic performance will improve or diminish as a result of transferring schools (or of choosing to remain when the district becomes one of excellence). Participants also indicated that student behavior might improve or deteriorate as a result of transferring schools (or remaining in a "nonselective" school). School personnel told us that student behavior is often related to the behavior of other students in the school. Others indicated that student behavior is a function of how effectively the school works with students. They questioned the extent to which a large influx of students with disabilities would affect the behavior of those students with disabilities who chose not to transfer.

There are other issues regarding effects on academic performance, attitudes, and behaviors. School personnel and students tell us that while many transfers are made by

students seeking a school that better meets their needs, many students with disabilities are moving in an effort to avoid problems. For example, "Everybody hates me here and I want to go to a place where I can make some friends." On the other hand, students with disabilities also tell us that some students choose not to transfer because their home school is where their friends are.

Environmental Quality. Participants in the working session said that they were concerned about the extent to which open enrollment would alter the quality of school environments and instructional environments. They indicated that the effects could be either positive or negative. For example, an administrator argued that the move to raise standards in order to keep large numbers of students would result in improved instructional quality. Others suggested that an influx of large numbers of students with disabilities would result in instruction of lower quality and an overall low quality educational environment.

Dropout Rate. People are concerned about the potential effect of open enrollment on dropout rate. They argue both sides of this issue. For some, enabling students to transfer districts will avert them from dropping out. They point to the success of the High School Graduation Incentives Program and Area Learning Centers in Minnesota in helping several thousand students who had dropped out return to school (Nathan & Jennings, 1990). Others argue that open enrollment

legislation will increase dropout rate. They contend that students with disabilities will experience increased difficulty as schools raise standards to be schools of excellence.

### Implementation Issues

Participants in the working session identified five major implementation issues. They described these as follows.

Least Restrictive Environment. Students with disabilities may choose to transfer from one school district to another in order to be placed in a setting that is either more or less restrictive than their current setting. Given that eligibility criteria differ among school districts, a student who is eligible in district A may be ineligible for special education services in district B. The student may make the decision to attend district A in order to receive services, or might choose to attend district B in order to avoid the stigma of being placed in a self-contained class.

Many LRE decisions involve due process and hearings. An administrator at our working session expressed concern that open enrollment would lead to a series of "end runs" in which parents who were unsuccessful at a due process hearing would shift their child to another district and go through another hearing. And, as he said, "They could do this over and over again until the district 'gets it right'."

Provision of Information. Before students or parents can take advantage of open enrollment, they must know about the

opportunity to do so. There may be differences in the ways in which parents of students with disabilities and other parents learn of open enrollment. Students with disabilities may be encouraged by their home district to enroll elsewhere; or they may be encouraged to stay. At the working session a representative of the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) highlighted this concern when she stated that "There's a high percentage of parents out there who don't have the faintest idea what's going on in school. So they must be educated about choice so they can help their kids."

Transportation. Especially for students who transfer from one district to another, there may be major transportation issues. When a decision is made to have a student attend a school outside his/her district, it is the responsibility of the parents to transport the student to the new district's boundary line. What happens when the student who transfers has severe disabilities that require special forms of transportation (such as wheelchair access and the availability of oxygen)? Will students be denied the opportunity to transfer because of special transportation needs? Is this then a denial of equal protection and a violation of the open enrollment statute?

In some districts, parents are getting together in groups to arrange the transportation of their children. Parents who transport their children are entitled to partial reimbursement for transportation costs. This raises concern

among administrators who express fear that open enrollment will involve extensive paperwork.

Reasons for Non-Participation. At this point we do not have good data on why parents may choose not to transfer their children with disabilities. The extent to which active choices are made may be different among the various categories of students. Conference participants told us it would be very important to document the reasons for decisions not to transfer. A Director of Special Education indicated that she was very anxious to document the reasons why parents did not transfer their children when they really wanted to. She indicated that in her experience parents sometimes feel they do not have the power to transfer their children. She was less concerned about parents who feel empowered and act on the opportunity to transfer. A representative of a teacher's union indicated that a lot of parents and students decide not to transfer because "they feel trapped and see no way out."

Dropout as an Independent Variable. In some states dropout is a criterion for participation in certain enrollment options. Some states enable students to participate in enrollment options (like High School Graduation Incentives) or to attend any high school of their choice if they have dropped out of school. At issue here is the extent to which students will drop out of school in order to be eligible for enrollment in new programs. At our working session an



administrator put the issue well when he said that school personnel could simply tell a youngster who is over 16 "Well if you really want to go somewhere else, you can just drop out of school for more than three weeks, come off enrollment, and do it on your own."

### Demographics

There are a number of issues and concerns relative to open enrollment that best can be termed demographic issues. These are as follows:

Fairness and Equity. A major concern regarding open enrollment is the extent to which all students will have an equal opportunity to transfer schools. To the extent that students with disabilities have the same opportunities as those without disabilities, fairness may be demonstrated. To the extent that they do not learn of open enrollment options, or are coerced to leave or stay in a district, or are denied the opportunity to transfer, unfairness or inequity may be evidenced (and, of course, this can happen with nonhandicapped students).

Who Transfers? Specific types, categories, or kinds of students may elect to transfer under enrollment options. For example, students with learning disabilities might opt to transfer far more often than those with emotional disabilities. Students with mental retardation who are of one race may choose to remain in their district of residence while those who are not of that race may choose to transfer.

### Convenience

Issues of "who" transfers may also be related to the educational "with-it-ness" of families. Teachers attending our working session told us that students who transfer are from families who are "Educationally in touch, economically in touch, who advocate, access, and participate." Others argued that this is not the case, pointing out that research by Nathan and Jennings (1990) showed that significant numbers of students who transfer come from families who have received welfare or general assistance in the past five years.

Many parents have indicated that they choose to transfer their children as a matter of convenience (the receiving school is nearer their office, or nearer the daycare center to which they transport their other children). There are demographic considerations here. Single moms indicate that they transfer their children because the daycare services they use for a younger sibling are in the receiving district. Or, they indicate that they have their children attend school within walking distance of a friend whom they want to have take care of the child after school. Others point out that such decisions are beneficial. They may enable a parent to spend more time with their child, or they may lead to better supervision of the children. Or, the "convenience" involved may enable a parent (who would not otherwise be able to do so) to work, pay taxes, and have a "decent life."

## **Issues for School Districts**

While open enrollment legislation creates many issues for students, it also creates a set of issues and concerns for school districts. Participants in the working session identified three categories of concerns related to districts: Outcome issues, implementation issues, and demographic issues. These are discussed below.

### Outcome Issues

One set of issues has to do with outcomes, or with what happens to districts that gain and lose large numbers of students with disabilities.

Program Excellence. As school districts endeavor to keep the students they currently have enrolled and to attract new students they strive to create programs of excellence (or at least instructional programs they view as being "better"). Will districts be able to do so if they gain large numbers of students with disabilities? Will districts develop innovative, high quality special education programs to attract students with disabilities? There is more than one side to the issue of excellence. Participants in our working session indicated that parents of students with disabilities in her district believe the student has the right to attend school in the resident district. The parents go to school personnel and say "My child has a right to be here, you shape up the program so that it meets his needs and can accommodate him."

Assessment Practices. Districts vary in their practices in assessment of newly entering students. Some are willing to rely on the records the students bring with them, others require entirely new psychoeducational evaluations. Will influx of students with disabilities create for schools a new set of demands to assess students?

Gain/Loss of Teachers and Related Services Personnel. Is one of the outcomes of open enrollment legislation gain or loss of teachers? Is this relevant? Do districts who have large numbers of students with disabilities transfer out or lose teachers? Do those who gain students also gain teachers? Or does teacher availability function as a criterion in admissions and transfer decisions? Some of the participants in our working session indicated that gain or loss of teachers was irrelevant. For them, the "bottom line" was whether students were better off.

Excess Program Costs. Excess program costs must be paid by the resident district. To what extent will resident districts be willing to pay large excess costs, especially for students with severe disabilities? How do excess cost considerations affect transfer decisions? When are excess costs considered excessive, and who makes that decision?

Changes in Excess Levies. Districts accepting students under open enrollment receive monies from the state to pay for the student's education. They do not receive excess levies which may have been imposed by the district. If large numbers of

students with disabilities transfer, the receiving district may end up short of cash. Proponents of choice point out that districts decide how many students to admit.

Effects on Special Education Child Counts. There are two ways in which child counts can become an issue. When districts employ different eligibility criteria and students with disabilities transfer, they may be counted differently. This may affect reimbursements, especially in states that employ weighted funding formulas.

#### Implementation Issues

There are at least seven issues identified for districts in implementing open enrollment. These are as follows:

Criteria for Between District Transfer. School districts must specify the criteria they will use to make decisions about acceptance/rejection of applicants for transfer under open enrollment. Each district is responsible for developing reasonable and nondiscriminatory approval guidelines. Although the guidelines cannot include handicapping conditions, previous academic achievement or disciplinary proceedings, they can include capacity of a program or building. Anticipated school district space needs (e.g., for students in the district who will be referred and placed during the year) can be a reason for not accepting a transfer. It is expected that guidelines will differ among school districts, and that this will affect transfer. Those in attendance at the working session wanted to know

specifically who in a district would have responsibility for insuring that criteria were fair and nondiscriminatory.

Some parents, especially those with the financial resources to do so, have found a way to cope with criteria for transfer. Participants at our working session shared with us scenarios in which parents were denied the option to transfer their student and then simply informed the school that "I'm moving into the district and you'll have to take her anyway."

Planning. Some administrators express considerable concern about the effects of open enrollment on planning. Districts must be considerably ahead of time in planning assignment of pupils to programs, meeting staffing needs, allocating resources, etc. Students who wish to transfer must apply by December 31, so districts that are attractive to large numbers of students may know the nature of their enrollment earlier than districts losing students. This will affect planning, especially for those students with disabilities who require very expensive programming. Participants in our working session called our attention to another aspect of planning. When parents request transfer they complete an application form. On the form they are to indicate whether their child has a special need. Parents at our working session asked "What happens if the parent simply decides not to let the district know that the child is a student with disabilities? On the first day of school the school is confronted with a student with disabilities, but didn't know

they were getting the student." Others counter with the argument that this has always been the case; schools may receive students from out of state or those who move from one district to another.

Provision of Information. Provision of information to parents and students about open enrollment options is an important part of advancing their equitable use. Districts differ in the procedures they use to inform people of options, and this may be an issue of concern.

Local Control. Concern is expressed about the effects of open enrollment on local control. It has been argued that open enrollment will harm small schools and districts because they cannot provide expensive services and will lose students. This may result in school closings and decreased local community input. Others argue that schools will need to become more sensitive to parent and community desires to keep up enrollment. They contend that choice will enhance local control. They also argue that choice will lead to more cooperation among school districts. In fact, Urahn (1991) reported that Open Enrollment in Minnesota led to increased cooperation among school districts.

Transportation. Under law, sending districts are not required to transport students and receiving districts are only required to transport from the district boundary. If a family is below the poverty line, as determined by the federal government, parents can be reimbursed by the

nonresident district for the costs of transporting their children to and from the district border. Does this apply to special forms of transportation that may be required for students with disabilities? Will transportation requirements act as a disincentive for transfer of students with disabilities? At our working session an administrator said he would not want to be involved in the large amount of paperwork required to process reimbursements for parents who were below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> He indicated this would be a special concern for students with disabilities, a disproportionate number of whom are from poverty families.

Criteria for Identifying Students as Handicapped. There are differences among districts in the criteria used to identify students with disabilities. Districts may modify their criteria to limit or encourage students with disabilities to participate in open enrollment.

Mainstreaming. The initiative toward mainstreaming students with disabilities may influence parental decisions about changing districts, and this in turn may influence the mainstreaming initiative.

### Demographic Issues

Native American Schools. In some states (for example in northern Minnesota) some school district boundaries are

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<sup>1</sup>Forms for reimbursement of transportation expenses are actually completed by parents. Parents must report financial information as well as miles traveled daily. The districts reimburse the parents. District administrators complete a list of payouts each month and report this (one line for each family) to the state.



contiguous with reservation boundaries. At issue is the extent to which Native American students will attend districts outside a reservation. Some residents of reservations indicate they prefer to attend schools where they live, avoiding long bus rides and enabling attendance at schools comprised entirely of other Native Americans.

Small Rural School Districts. Open enrollment may result in widespread movement of students with special needs from small rural school districts to larger districts where there are more program options. This may make it nearly impossible to carry on viable special education programs in some rural districts.

### **The Ranked Importance of the Issues**

Participants at the working conference ranked the issues prior to engaging in discussions about them. Means and standard deviations for rankings of 15 issues for students with disabilities who transfer are presented in Table 3. Reason for transfer was consistently ranked highest ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=3.35$ ). Parental satisfaction, transportation, effects on academic performance, variations in families participating, provision of information, effects on student behavior, and parental involvement received moderate (5-8) average rankings. Concerns related to participation by category, dropouts, district coercion, interdistrict communication, academic credits and graduation requirements, and native American reservation schools received consistently low rankings (above 8).

Means and standard deviations for rankings of eight issues for students with disabilities who do not transfer are presented in Table 4. Parental satisfaction was consistently ranked highest ( $M=3.38$ ,  $SD= 2.50$ ). Parental and student reasons for nonparticipation, effects on academic performance, subtle coercion, dropouts, effects on student behaviors, nonparticipation by category, and raising standards to attract students all received moderate average rankings.

Means and standard deviations for rankings of 16 issues for districts are presented in Table 5. Program excellence, transportation, planning, approval criteria, excess program costs, small district concerns, provision of information, personnel effects, and mainstreaming received moderate (5-8) average rankings. Concerns related to effects on identification criteria, local control, excess levies, child counts, assessment practices, and Native American Indian schools allocations received consistently lower rankings (above 8).

As a result of the group consensus discussion, it became apparent that issues for students with disabilities who transfer and who do not transfer could be combined and treated separately from issues for districts. The most highly ranked issues in these two groups are presented in Table 6.

### **Summary and Perspective**

We entered the working session with a set of issues generated on the basis of a review of the literature. The participants essentially confirmed the fact that we had done a reasonably good

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Pre-Discussion Ranking of Issues  
For Students With Disabilities And Who Transfer

Issue	Mean	SD
Reasons for movement	4.00	3.35
Parental Satisfaction	5.75	3.96
Transportation	6.00	3.02
Effects on academic performance	6.31	4.21
Variation in families who participate	6.53	3.96
Provision of information	6.67	4.09
Effects on student behavior	6.75	3.73
Least restrictive environment issues	6.93	4.36
Parent involvement	7.00	4.46
Participation by category	8.20	3.99
Dropouts	9.80	3.10
Coercion	9.87	3.86
Interdistrict communication	10.20	4.31
Credits and graduation requirements	10.44	2.37
Native American reservation schools	12.33	2.89

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Pre-Discussion Ranking of Issues  
For Students With Disabilities Who Do Not Transfer

Issue	Mean	SD
Parent satisfaction	3.38	2.50
Reasons for nonparticipation	3.60	2.03
Effects on academic performance	4.31	2.42
Subtle coercion	4.67	2.05
Dropout	4.73	2.26
Effects on student behavior	4.75	2.25
Nonparticipation by category	4.80	2.32
Raising standards to attract students	4.81	1.88

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Pre-Discussion Ranking of Issues  
For Districts

Issue	Mean	SD
Program excellence	5.07	3.82
Transportation	5.20	3.15
Planning	5.94	4.23
Criteria for approving transfers	6.20	4.12
Excess program costs	6.87	4.32
Small rural school districts	7.25	4.26
Provision of information	7.33	3.98
Gain and loss of teachers	7.38	4.74
Mainstreaming	7.80	3.37
Eligibility criteria	8.81	4.99
Local control	9.73	3.62
Changes in excess levies	10.00	4.17
Effects on student counts	10.33	3.94
Assessment practices	10.67	4.38
Native American Indian schools	11.87	3.05
Chapter I allocations	12.00	3.57

job of identifying salient issues. What participants thought were major issues were congruent with those we identified. At the same time, participants caused us to think about the issues in different ways, and provided us with a conceptual model for viewing the issues. We entered the meeting with issues for students who transfer, issues for students who do not transfer, and issues for districts. We came out of the meeting with issues for students with disabilities and issues for districts.

Participants helped us see that there are three kinds of issues: outcomes issues, implementation issues, and demographic issues. Participants helped us see that issues differ in importance. They were much more concerned with matters of outcomes and implementation than with demographic issues.

Finally, participants helped us understand that much of the emotion that surrounds discussions of choice is a result of very differing perspectives on the topic. There are at least five major kinds of concerns reflected in debates about choice.

For some, the central concern is pupil benefit. They argue that there is no one kind of school that is best for all students, and that students will profit differentially from different kinds of schools. They argue for (or against) choice on the basis of pupil benefits and pupil outcomes in the form of improved behavior, attitudes or academic performance. They tend to see district concerns as largely irrelevant. Districts, they might say, exist (to meet the needs of, to serve, for the convenience of) the student.

Table 5

## Consensus Issues For Districts And Students With Disabilities

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Issue
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<b>Districts</b>
Outcome Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Excellence</li> <li>• Assessment Practices</li> <li>• Gain/Loss Of Teachers</li> <li>• Excess Program Costs</li> <li>• Changes In Excess Levies</li> <li>• Effects On Special Education Child Counts</li> <li>• Chapter I Allocations</li> </ul>
Implementation Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria For Between Distric Transfers</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Provision of Information</li> <li>• Local Control</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Criteria For Identifying Students As Handicapped</li> <li>• Mainstreaming</li> </ul>
Demographics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native American Schools</li> <li>• Small Rural Disricts</li> </ul>
<b>Students Who Are Handicapped</b>
Outcome Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Satisfaction/Involvement</li> <li>• Student Satisfaction</li> <li>• Effects On Academic Performance And Student Behavior</li> <li>• Environmental Quality</li> <li>• Dropout Rate</li> </ul>
Implementation Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Least Restrictive Environment</li> <li>• Provision of Information</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Reasons For Non-Participation</li> <li>• Dropouts As A Independent Variable</li> </ul>
Demographics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Who Transfers</li> </ul>

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For some, choice is a matter of parent convenience. They argue for or against choice, using as a criterion the extent to which it makes life easier or better for parents. Issues or concerns arise as a function of the extent to which choice enhances or interferes with parent satisfaction and perceived quality of life.

Many of the fears or concerns expressed about choice are concerns about job protection. Just as some special educators worry about losing their jobs as students with disabilities are integrated into regular education settings, so too some are worried about losing jobs when students transfer

Fourth, for some the key concern in implementation of choice legislation for students with disabilities is concern about change. They simply view choice as a threat because it may mean having to change. Finally, some of the fears and concerns about choice are concerns about workload. In many of the arguments raised, the real concern was that choice might mean more work.

We are currently embarking on a five-year investigation designed to gather data on the effects of open enrollment legislation on students with disabilities. Collection of data will provide empirical evidence in response to concerns that are now often largely matters of opinion.



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## **Appendix A**

Cover letter

Agenda

Lists of issues sent in participants' packets.

Map

date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for agreeing to attend the conference on September 27, 1990, to discuss open enrollment issues. Enclosed in this packet you will find: an agenda for the conference, three lists of issues, ranking sheets for each group of issues, and a map to the Midway Sheraton where the conference will be held.

Because we have condensed what was originally planned as a two-day conference into a one-day conference, we are requesting that you complete some work before the conference. In this packet you will find three sets of issues: one for students who choose to transfer schools, another for students who choose not to transfer, and a third for districts. Before you come to the meeting, rank the issues in order of importance for each set of issues. To obtain this ranking, adhere to the following steps:

1. Read through all of the issues for one area (areas are color coded, so you can read all of the issues on the yellow pages, for example).
2. Rank each issue as high in importance, medium importance, or low importance.
3. Rank order the issues within each grouping (high, medium, low).
4. At the end you will have a rank ordering of the issues with "1" being the most important. Transfer your rank ordering to the appropriate sheets (same color, two copies).
5. Follow the same procedure for the other two sets of issues.

Please bring the ranking sheets and the rest of the package with you to the conference. The ranking sheets will be collected at the registration table. It is necessary that you fill out these forms before the conference. If they are not completed, we will need to ask you to fill them out when you register.

We look forward to seeing you on the 27th.

Sincerely,

James E. Ysseldyke, Ph.D.  
Professor of Educational Psychology

# AGENDA

8:00-8:30	Registration	
8:30-10:00	Opening Remarks	James Ysseldyke
	Minnesota Options Program	Peggy Hunter
	Options programs: A national perspective	Joe Nathan
	Student experiences with Open Enrollment	Students
10:00-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:15	Address issues for students who transfer	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examine list of issues</li><li>• Generate new issues</li><li>• Rank order issues in order of importance</li></ul>	
11:15-12:00	Group reports on students who transfer	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each group reports rankings and rationale</li></ul>	
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-1:45	Address issues for students who do not transfer	
1:45-2:30	Group reports	
2:30-3:00	Break	
3:00-3:45	Address issues for districts	
3:45-4:30	Group reports	
4:30-5:00	Whole group consensus on most important issues	

## ISSUES FOR DISTRICTS

Issue	Explanation	Research Questions
1 Criteria for approving between-district transfer of students with special needs.	Each district is responsible for developing reasonable and nondiscriminatory approval guidelines. Although the guidelines cannot include handicapping conditions, previous academic achievement or disciplinary proceedings, they can include capacity of a program or building. Anticipated school district space needs (e.g., for students in district who will be referred and placed during the year) can be a reason for not accepting a transfer. It will be important to look at actual guidelines. It is expected that these guidelines, and thus who is accepted for transfer, will vary between districts.	<p>1a To what extent do transfer criteria differ by district?</p> <p>1b Who is responsible for ensuring that transfer criteria are "reasonable and nondiscriminatory?"</p> <p>1c How often is "lack of space" stated as a criterion for denial of transfer to students who are handicapped?</p>
2 Planning.	<p>Districts must plan their assignment of pupils to programs, resource allocation, curriculum, etc.</p> <p>Districts that are attractive to large numbers of students will know the nature of their enrollment (characteristics of students) earlier than districts losing students. This affects planning, especially for those students with handicaps that require very expensive programming.</p>	2 What is the effect of open enrollment on district planning?
3 Gain and loss of teachers.	Federal and state money follows students when they change districts. Staffing needs change as numbers of students with handicaps change.	<p>3a To what extent do districts gain or lose special education teacher positions as a result of open enrollment?</p> <p>3b When there are employment changes, when in the calendar year are districts aware of the necessary changes?</p>
4 Excess Program Costs.	Excess program costs for handicapped students must be paid by the resident district.	4 When are excess program costs for students with handicaps determined to be excessive, and who makes this decision?
5 Native American Indian Schools.	School districts in northern Minnesota frequently follow reservation boundaries, and use of open enrollment options may be different in these areas.	<p>5a To what extent do students with handicaps who attend "reservation schools" use open enrollment?</p> <p>5b To what extent do characteristics of nonparticipants who are handicapped reflect the characteristics of other students remaining in the district?</p>
6 Small rural school districts.	Open enrollment may result in widespread movement of students with special needs from small rural school districts to larger districts where there are more program options. This may make it nearly impossible to carry on viable special education programs in rural districts.	<p>6a To what extent is there a movement of students who are handicapped from small rural school districts to larger districts?</p> <p>6b What is the effect of open enrollment on special education program offerings in small rural school districts?</p>

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|----|--|--|--|
| 7  | <b>Provision of information.</b>                         | Providing information to parents and students about open enrollment options is an important part of advancing their equitable use, but may vary by different districts.  | 7a Is information about open enrollment options provided equally among districts?  |
|    |  |  | 7b How are parents of students who are handicapped provided with information about enrollment options?   |
|    |  |  | 7c Are there differences in provision of information to parents of specific categories of students with handicaps?                                     |
| 8  | <b>Local control.</b>                                    | It has been argued that open enrollment will harm small schools and districts because they cannot provide expensive services, and thus they will lose students and be closed, decreasing local community input on schools. Others argue that schools will need to become more responsive to community desires to keep up enrollment, and thus local control will increase.   | 8a To what extent does open enrollment affect the involvement of the community in local school issues, especially for students who are handicapped?    |
|    |  |  | 8b To what extent do local schools gain or lose control of programs, scheduling, and curricula for students with special needs?                        |
| 9  | <b>Changes in excess levies.</b>                         | Districts accepting students under open enrollment receive reimbursement from the state, but not for any excess levies which they may have imposed for their districts' schools.   | 9a Do districts that impose "excess levies" receive more students than they send under the open enrollment options.                                    |
|    |  |  | 9b Is the system for collecting "excess levies" altered after open enrollment begins (ex: user fees)?  |
| 10 | <b>Transportation</b>                                    | Under law, sending districts are not required to transport students and receiving districts are only required to transport from the district border. If the family is below the poverty line, as determined by the federal government, the student can be transported to the border of the nonresident district and be reimbursed by the nonresident district. But, does this apply to special forms of transportation that may be required for students with handicaps? | 10a Are provisions made to provide transportation for students with handicaps?   |
|    |  |  | 10b Who pays for transportation costs for students with special needs?   |
|    |  |  | 10c What special difficulties in transportation are encountered by students with special needs who participate in open enrollment?                     |
| 11 | <b>Criteria for identifying students as handicapped.</b> | There are differences among districts in the criteria used to identify students as handicapped. Districts may modify their criteria to limit or encourage students who are handicapped to participate in open enrollment.  | 11a How often does individual student eligibility for special education services change when students change districts?                                |
|    |  |  | 11b Do districts change their criteria as a function of open enrollment?   |
| 12 | <b>Mainstreaming.</b>                                    | The initiative towards mainstreaming handicapped students may influence parental decisions about changing districts, and this in turn may influence the mainstreaming initiative.  | 12a To what extent do parents of students with handicaps use open enrollment options to achieve greater integration or segregation for their students? |
|    |  |  | 12b Do schools make changes in programming to attract parents to their districts?  |

13	Effects on special education and child count.	There are 10 categories of handicapping conditions specified in federal legislation. As open enrollment is implemented, members of specific "types" will vary.	13a To what extent do district child counts vary in total and by category as a result of open enrollment?
			13b How much does the child count taken on December 1 differ from the actual numbers of students in the Fall?
			13c How do overall state student counts of handicapped students change with the implementation of open enrollment?
14	Program excellence.	High quality, innovative special education programming will attract students from other districts.	14a What is the relationship between "programs of excellence" and the gain or loss of students?
			14b Is there an increase in the implementation of "programs of excellence" for handicapped students?
15	Chapter I allocations.	Federal Chapter I allocations are given to schools based upon the economic makeup of their student body, a makeup which may change with open enrollment.	15 Does open enrollment change the quantity and location of Chapter I monies provided to MN schools?
16	Assessment practices.	Assessment practices for the admission of new students who have been receiving special education services vary by district.	16 To what extent does open enrollment change the demand for special education assessment and re-evaluations within districts?

## ISSUES FOR HANDICAPPED STUDENTS WHO ARE NON-PARTICIPANTS

Issue	Explanation	Research Questions
1 Raising standards to attract students from other districts.	When districts raise their standards to attract students (e.g., require 2 language courses for graduation, etc.), students who already are having difficulty in school may find school standards impossible to meet.	1a To what extent do nonparticipants with handicaps experience greater failure with changing standards? 1b To what extent are those who remain in district viewed more negatively?
2 Dropout.	Dropout rates are generally higher for students with handicaps. They are also associated with student attendance and other indices of school engagement?	2a To what extent are nonparticipants "engaged" in their current schools? 2b To what extent do the dropout rates of nonparticipants change as a result of open enrollment?
3 Affects on academic performance.	Effects on academic performance could result from either a decrease or increase in students with handicaps, and the types of students entering or leaving the nonparticipant's district.	3a To what extent is the academic performance of students with handicaps related to the characteristics of students with handicaps leaving or entering the district?
4 Effects on student behavior.	Student behavior and self esteem often are related to the behavior of other students. A large influx of students with behavior difficulties might have a negative impact on students' behavior. Or changes in the behavior of other students may influence others to perceive behavior of student as more of a problem or less of a problem.	4a To what extent is perception of student's behavior as a problem influenced by characteristics of other students with handicaps remaining in the district? 4b To what extent does self-esteem of nonparticipants reflect the characteristics of other students with handicaps remaining in the district?



5	Subtle coercion.	Students must meet with someone in their district before transferring. At this point, they may be exposed to coercion to stay in district.	5a	To what extent have students with handicaps who remain in the district been coerced by school officials to remain?
			5b	To what extent are nonparticipants who are handicapped currently being encouraged to leave?
6	Parental and student reasons for nonparticipation.	Parents and students who do not participate in open enrollment may do so for specific reasons or because they may not know about the option.	6a	To what extent do parents and students who do not participate in open enrollment have specific reasons for nonparticipation?
			6b	What are the reasons for nonparticipation?
7	Nonparticipation by specific categories of students with handicaps.	Nonparticipation may be differential for students with different handicapping conditions for a variety of reasons (e.g., parents satisfied with MR program, parents nonsatisfied with LD program).	7a	To what extent are there differences in the participation rates for students with different handicaps?
			7b	Given differences in participation rates, are there associated differences in reasons for nonparticipation?
8	Parent satisfaction.	Parental satisfaction may be a reason behind nonparticipation. Parent satisfaction for nonparticipants may change as a function of the nature of changes resulting from open enrollment.	8a	To what extent are parents of nonparticipants who are handicapped satisfied with current programs provided.
			8b	To what extent is parent satisfaction related to changes in school programs or students?

## ISSUES FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE HANDICAPPED

Issue	Explanation	Research Questions
1	Variation in the kinds of families whose children participate.	Some groups of parents or students may be more attracted than others to transferring districts. Certain families may choose certain districts and certain districts may be more attractive to certain families.
		1a To what extent are there demographic differences of families with handicapped children who choose the open enrollment option and those who do not?
		1b To what extent is there an interaction between selective districts and family characteristics when the open enrollment option is used?
2	LRE Issues.	Factors such as the structure of the special education programs may be reasons for transfer between districts. Selective districts may be viewed as more or less integrative and provide desired LRE for students with handicaps.
		2a To what extent do parents of students with handicaps use open enrollment options to achieve greater integration or segregation for their students?
		2b To what extent are parents of students with handicaps attracted to districts with specific special education characteristics?
3	Native American Reservation Schools.	Throughout Minnesota, school districts follow Native American reservation boundaries. Through open enrollment, students with handicaps attending reservation schools will have the option to attend schools outside of the reservation.
		3a To what extent do students with handicaps from Native American Reservation Schools access other schools through the open enrollment option?

Issue	Explanation	Research Questions
4 Credits and Graduation Requirements.	Districts have different requirements for students with handicaps in regards to credits and graduation.	<p>4a To what extent do students with handicaps change districts in order to benefit from less stringent academic or graduation requirements?</p> <p>4b How do districts resolve credit requirement inconsistencies of handicapped students who transfer from one district to another?</p> <p>4c To what extent do districts use credit and graduation criteria to discourage the possibility of students with special needs transferring into their district?</p>
5 Provision of Information.	Providing information to parents and students about open enrollment options is an important part of advancing its use. Parents with children who are handicapped need to have specific information regarding different districts' criteria for identification of handicapped as well as services which are offered to students with special needs.	<p>5a How is information concerning district special education criteria and services disseminated to parents with children who are handicapped?</p> <p>5b Is the provision of information related to the number and groups of families of disadvantaged children (e.g., categorical and severity differences) who use the open enrollment option?</p>

Issue	Explanation	Research Questions
6 Transportation.	Under law, sending districts are not required to transport students and receiving districts are only required to transport from the district border. If the family is below the poverty line, as determined by the federal government, the student can be transported to the border of the nonresident district and be reimbursed by the nonresident district. But, does this apply to special forms of transportation that may be required for students with handicaps?	<p>6a Do specific and costly transportation needs of students who are handicapped have an impact on the acceptance or rejection by selective districts?</p> <p>6b Are provisions made to provide transportation for students with handicaps?</p> <p>6c What district (home/selected) is responsible for arranging transportation for students with handicaps if a need arises for unique transportation needs?</p>
7 Inter-district communication.	Guidelines for the provision of information about students are not specified.	7 Do special education files always follow students (even against requests of parents)?
8 Coercion.	When parents talk about applying for a transfer with a district representative, there is a possibility that coercion will be used to dissuade parents. This may be a bigger problem for parents of students with handicaps.	8 To what extent does coercion occur when parents of students with handicaps apply for a transfer?
9 Effects on Academic Performance.	Students with mental handicaps may move to schools where they believe they will be provided a greater degree of freedom. Students may also move to schools where they feel they will receive better instruction.	9 To what extent will students' general academic performance drop or increase as a result of open enrollment?

Issue	Explanation	Research Questions
10 Effects on Student Behavior.	Students' behavioral problems may improve or deteriorate as a result of moving to a selective school or remaining in a nonselective school, respectively.	10 To what extent will students' behavior improve or deteriorate as a result of choosing to participate in open enrollment?
11 Reasons for Movement.	Reasons for movement may include opportunity to participate in a wider array of school activities, better programs, or more convenient school location.	11a To what extent does open enrollment have an impact on extracurricular participation? 11b What rationale do students and parents give for transferring? 11c How did parents/learners make their decision?
12 Participation by Specific Categories of Students with Handicaps.	Certain categories of students with handicaps may participate more often in open enrollment than others.	12a Which categories of special education students are taking advantage of open enrollment? 12b To what extent is each category involved in the open enrollment process? 12c What rationale is provided by parents/students of each handicapping condition?
13 Parental Satisfaction.	Raywid (19____) cites more than 120 studies indicating that when families have the opportunity to select among different kinds of public schools, students' academic achievement and attitudes improve. Parents are more involved, supportive, and satisfied.	13 To what extent does participation in open enrollment affect parent satisfaction?
14 Parent Involvement.	Proponents of choice argue that open enrollment will expand parental involvement.	14 To what extent does participation in open enrollment affect parent involvement with the schools?

Issue	Explanation	Research Questions
15 Dropout.	Proponents of choice argue that open enrollment will decrease student dropout rate.	15 To what extent does participation in open enrollment affect dropout rates of the participants?